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Message Text

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70
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-05 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

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R 181705Z DEC 74
FM AMEMBASSY DUBLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6272
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"LONDON POUCH BELFAST"

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINS, EI
SUBJECT: PROTESTANT LEADERS MEET WITH PROVOS

1. DUBLIN NEWSPAPERS DECEMBER 12 REPORT HIGH-LEVEL MEETING IN FEAKLE, COUNTY CLARE, BETWEEN PROTESTANT CHURCHMEN AND SINN FEIN/ IRA LEADERS. PROVO LEADERS REPORTED PRESENT WERE RUAIRI O BRADAIGH, MAIRE DRUMM, JIMMY DRUMM, SEAMUS LOUGHRAN, DAITHI O CONAILL, SEAMUS TWOMEY, KEVIN MALLON, AND JOSEPH O'HAGAN. (THIS SOUNDS LIKE MOST OF KNOWN PROVO LEADERSHIP.) SEVERAL OF THESE ARE WANTED BY POLICE.

2. PROTESTANTS INCLUDED A CHURCH OF IRELAND BISHOP PLUS A SENIOR PRESBYTERIAN AND METHODIST. MEETING THUS GAVE IMPRESSION OF HAVING OFFICIAL CHURCH SANCTION, ALTHOUGH SOME PARTICIPANTS HAVE DENIED IT. NO CATHOLICS WERE PRESENT. REASON FOR ABSENCE HAS NOT BEEN EXPLAINED, BUT ONE SENIOR CHURCH OFFICIAL HAS NOTED THAT CATH- OLIC HIERARCHY HAS OTHER WAYS OF MEETING IRA.

3. IF PRESS HAS FULL STORY, NOTHING VERY SUBSTANTIAL EMERGED FROM FEAKLE MEETING. CHURCHMEN APPEALED FOR PEACE AND ASKED IF IRA WOULD CEASE ITS CAMPAIGN OF VIOLENCE. PROVOS REPLIED THAT
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THEY WOULD CONSIDER CHURCH REQUEST BUT THAT THE BALL WAS IN

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BRITAIN'S COURT, PRESUMABLY REFERRING TO STANDARD IRA DEMANDS FOR END OF INTERNMENT, DECLARATION OF BRITISH INTENT TO WITHDRAW, AND SO ON.

4. SHORTLY AFTER TOP IRA FIGURES HAD LEFT MEETING, A VERY LARGE POLICE FORCE INVADED THE PREMISES. NONE OF PROVO LEADERS WERE CAUGHT. THEY CLAIM THAT THEY RECEIVED A TIP-OFF. IF THIS IS TRUE (AS SEEMS LIKELY), PROVOS CLEARLY HAD BETTER INTELLIGENCE ON POLICE THAN POLICE HAD ON PROVOS.

5. MEETING WITH PROVOS WAS ANNOUNCED ON SAME DAY AS A MAJOR PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN BY THE FOUR LEADING IRISH CHURCHES FOR PEACE BEGINNING AT CHRISTMASTIME. CATHOLIC, METHODIST, PRESBYTERIAN AND CHURCH OF IRELAND LEADERS ARE INVOLVED. LARGE ADVERTISEMENTS URGING PEACE ARE IN ALL PAPERS. JOURNALISTS WELCOME CAMPAIGN, BUT MOST DO NOT EXPECT SIGNIFICANT RESULTS EITHER FROM IT OR FROM THE RELATED FEAKLE MEETING. TWO PAPERS SUGGEST THAT THE MEETING WITH PROVOS MERELY INCREASED THEIR RESPECTABILITY.

6. COMMENT: PROVOS LIKE TO BELIEVE THAT THEY HAVE SOME APPEAL TO PROTESTANTS AS WELL AS CATHOLICS. IRA WILLINGENESS TO MEET PROTESTANT CHURCH LEADERS IS THEREFORE ENTIRELY PREDICTABLE. CHANCES OF SUCCESS ARE MUCH MORE REMOTE, THOUGH IT IS EASY TO UNDERSTAND WHY CHURCH LEADERS THOUGHT THE EFFORT WORTH MAKING. OUTCOME OF MEETING COULD SIMPLY BE TO INCREASE PROVO STATUS WITHOUT PRACTICAL RESULTS. CERTAINLY IRA HAS AGAIN MANAGED TO MAKE SECURITY FORCES LOOK FOOLISH.

7. THE JOINT CATHOLIC/PROTESTANT PEACE CAMPAIGN SHOULD HELP SLIGHTLY TO MAKE THE CLIMATE MORE MELLOW. WILLINGNESS TO EMBARK ON THE REAL REFORMS NEEDED FOR BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN COMMUNITIES WOULD, HOWEVER, HAVE A MUCH DEEPER EFFECT. MOST CHURCH LEADERS HAVE LONG BEEN WILLING TO CONDEMN VIOLENCE, SO LONG AS NO PAINFUL CONCESSIONS ARE INVLOVED.
MOORE

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